ACT 72 — PRELUDE TO THE PURSUIT

INSIDE THE UNDERGROUND TUNNEL OF ERI'S RESIDENCE, APPROXIMATELY 500 METERS FROM THE EXIT...

SANGRE Y FUEGO!

BLAM

CRACK

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?!

VERY WELL, WE'LL CHASE THE TRAIN! IS THERE ANYONE LEFT? ANY SURVIVORS?!

ALL OF THE 3000 AUTOMATA I BROUGHT HERE... HE TOOK THEM WITH HIM TO THE GRAVE...

I THOUGHT WE WERE DONE FOR, CAPITAN...

GUY, YOU BASTARD. TO THINK HE'D PUT EXPLOSIVES IN THE TUNNEL! SUCH COWARDICE...

YES, RIGHT HERE...

OHH, IT'S YOU!

THEN, ON-WARDS!!

RUMBLE

GACHUNK

VROOM

ガタン
GACHUNK

ゴー
CLUNK

トトトン

AROUND THAT SAME TIME, THE LOCOMOTIVE CARRYING THE SHUTTLE LEFT THE LARGEST UNDERGROUND TUNNEL ON EARTH THAT FOU MADE, EXTENDING OVER 100 KILOMETERS.

CLUNK
ゴトン
GACHUNK
ガタン

RATTLE
タタン
RATTLE
タタン

TODAY'S PROGRAM FEATURES US TRANSPORTING A SPACE SHUTTLE ALL THE WAY TO THE LAUNCHING SITE IN RUSSIA.

LISTEN UP, EVERYBODY. THE CIRCUS' CURTAINS ARE FINALLY RISING.

IT'S A LIFE-THREATENING STUNT.

Nakamachi Hiroo
(Tightrope)

NO REHEARSAL, EITHER.

Nakamachi Noriyuki
(Chair acrobatics)

NO COMPENSATION.

Nakamachi Shinobu
(Ringmaster)

HOWEVER, WE'VE GOTTA DO THIS.

Mitsuushi Moromi
Naota (Acrobat)

AND NO APPLAUSE.

Ubukata Houan
(Propman)

TO TOP IT OFF... NO AUDIENCE...

Vilma Thorn
(Knife Thrower)

...AND WE'LL HAVE NO ONE LEFT TO WATCH OUR SHOW...

'CAUSE IF WE MESS THIS UP, EVERY AUDIENCE MEMBER IN THE WORLD WILL CEASE TO EXIST...

Pantalone Arlechino (Automata)

Shirogane (Do-it-all)

Katou Narumi (Part-timer)

LET'S DO THIS!

SO...

NOW, NOW. TO PREPARE FOR THE UPCOMING BATTLE...

YEAH!

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT EITHER, BUT ACCORDING TO WHAT RYOUKO SAID...

THE KNIFE I LENT HER STOPPED ONE OF THOSE DOLL WITH JUST A SINGLE SCRATCH OF IT.

WHAT?! ARE YOU FOR REAL, VILMA...?

WHO WANTS SOME OF "VILMA'S KNIVES" THAT MAKES AUTOMATA FREEZE WITH ONE STAB?

HUH?!

ISN'T YOUR BLOOD EXTREMELY POISONOUS TO THE AUTOMATA?

I ASKED FOU, AND HE SAID IT'S BECAUSE THESE KNIVES HAD JUST A LITTLE OF SHIROGANE'S BLOOD LEFT IN THEM...

VROOM

ゴオオオ

GIVE ME THAT BACK

OK, OK.

YOU CAN HAVE THEM FOR FREE.

ONE FOR A THOUSAND BUCKS.

SO I'M DOING A SPECIAL OFFER ON THESE SIX KNIVES THAT HAVE SOME OF SHIROGANE'S BLOOD.

Y-YES ...

YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT KNOWING. RIGHT, SHIRO-GANE?

BUT WHY DO YOU HAVE SO MANY KNIVES WITH SHIRO-GANE'S BLOOD ON THEM?

THEY WON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HIT 'EM WITH THESE THINGS.

THANKS, VILMA.

RIGHT NOW, THE TRAIN'S LOOKING LIKE THIS. AS YOU CAN SEE, THE PASSENGER CARS ARE BEING PULLED UP BY EVERYTHING ELSE!

CAR

SHUTTLE

LOCOMOTIVE

YEAH

THE BARKING GEEZER SUCKS AT DRAWING

WE ARE HERE RIGHT NOW

WE'RE SCREWED IF THE ENEMY GETS US ALL IN THE SAME PLACE, SO LET'S DECIDE ON OUR POSITIONS!

ALRIGHT, LISTEN UP, EVERYBODY!

rustle

HUH ...?

!

ROOKIE AND SHIROGANE CAN SKIP THIS.

YOU TWO GO TO THE FURTHEST ONE AT THE FRONT.

WE'LL DECIDE WHO'LL STAY AT EACH CAR BY DRAWING LOTS.

OH, RIGHT!

T-THAT'S RIGHT. WHY JUST THE TWO OF US? DESPITE HOW I LOOK, I'VE FOUGHT THE DOLLS FOR A LONG TIME...

HOUAN-SAN, I WANT TO FIGHT ALONG EVERYBODY, TOO.

WHY AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS TO BE WITH THAT WOMAN...?!!

NO, THAT'S NOT IT...

BUT WHAT? ARE YOU SAYIN' THAT YOU'RE STRONGER THAN US?! ARE YOU MAKIN' FUN OF US?!

THEN LET US HANDLE HERE WHILE YOU PREPARE TO GIVE FACELESS A GOOD BEATING.

AND YOU GOTTA STUDY HOW TO FLY THE SHUTTLE!

YOU'LL BE FLYING THAT SHUTTLE TO THE SPACE STATION, RIGHT?!

ARE YOU DUMB, ROOKIE?!

WELL, YEAH, BUT I...

SO, YOU HAVE TO STAY CLOSE TO THE ROOKIE.

OUT OF ALL OF US, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S THE MOST USED TO FIGHTING THEM.

HUH?

IT'S JUST LIKE YOU SAID, SHIROGANE.

NAKAMACHI-SAN...

YOU'RE OUR STRONGEST MEMBER. SO YOU GOTTA PROTECT HIM.

OH, WELL!

TURN

I WANTED HER TO FIGHT BY MY SIDE...! BUT...

DAMMIT! I DON'T WANT TO LET SHIROGANE IN THE SAME ROOM AS THAT BEAR-LOOKING GUY, EITHER.

!

HEY, WHY NOT? IF WE GET IN A FIGHT, YOU'RE FREE TO COME OUT...

FULL

NORI-SAN... HIRO-SAN... BUT...

V-VILMA!

BUT UNTIL THEN, GO SPEND THESE LAST MOMENTS WITH THAT NICE MAN OF YOURS.

ポン!

CLOSE

THEN, WE'LL BE GOING. CALL US IF ANYTHING HAPPENS. WE'LL COME RIGHT AWAY.

NOW, GO.

GACHUNK ガタン ゴトン

TCH.

...YES.

GACHUNK
CLUNK
カタターン
コトトーン
THAT'S WHY "NOUVEAUX ENFANTS DE LA BALLE"* ARE SO NAIVE.
SHIRO-GANE'S OBLIVIOUS, ISN'T SHE?
AS IF, SILLY.

*"New generation of children raised by artists," but Vilma is specifically talking about children born outside of the circus

ALRIGHT, NOW LET'S DRAW LOTS!
OKAY, WE GET IT. YA WANNA STICK CLOSE TO SHIROGANE, RIGHT? YOU TWO CAN STAY IN THE CAR NEXT DOOR TO 'EM.
.....

PLEASE TRY TO CHEER UP! DON'T YOU NEED TO CATCH UP TO THE TRAIN AND PROTECT SHIROGANE?!
WOOSHH
MASTER!!

R... RIGHT...

THAT MR. HANDSOME CARRIED OUT HIS ROLE ON HIS OWN STAGE...

YEAH... BUT... GUY-SAN IS...

PRO-PELLER SOUNDS?!

!!

FWP FWP

SO...

KEHIHIHIH... LOOKS LIKE WE'RE FASTER THAN THIS BRAT'S PUPPET, ANOSS!

FWP FWP

WE CAN'T LET THEM GET AHEAD OF US!

AUTOMATA! THERE'S STILL SOME LEFT!!

_WOOSH

CLANK

SHAME FOR YOU, WILD WEST JANE HERE ALWAYS CHARGES AHEAD, JUST LIKE A BULLET.

WHOOPS, MY APOLO-GIES!

MY, DON'T YOU KNOW IT'S RUDE TO CALL A LADY HEAVY...?

YOU'RE RIGHT, KENISS. NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT WE'RE CARRYING SOME HEAVY LOAD...

BANG

BANG

BANG

MASTER, DODGE IT!

THROW!

DIE!

UWAH!!

YOU'RE LUCKY THAT I'M IN A HURRY, BRAT. I'LL SHOOT YOU DEAD LATER.

!

ARE YOU ALRIGHT, MASTER?

BUT IF I KNOCK DOWN THIS FLY HERE, CAPITAN WILL PRAISE ME A LOT MORE THAN HE'D DO WITH KENISS!

HEHEHEH, YOU'RE CORRECT, LADY SPIDER.

HEY, ANOSS. I BELIEVE YOUR JOB IS TO TAKE ME TO THE TRAIN, IS IT NOT? ENOUGH WITH THE NEEDLESS ACTIONS!

WOOSH

...GONNA LOSE!

I'M NOT...

MASTER!

UEHEHEH!

BLAM

WORTHLESS TRASH, I TOLD YOU SO!

NOOO!

THUD THUD

GACHUNK CLUNK

ガタン ゴトン

YOU SEEM TO BE IN A GOOD MOOD, VILMA.
THIS LAST CAR IS SURE TO BE ATTACKED, AREN'T YOU SCARED ANYWAY?
BEER
GACHUNK
GLUNK
SCARED ...?
HUHUH... ONLY MEMORIES ARE CAPABLE OF REALLY SCARING ME...
REMEMBERING THEM TIME AND TIME AGAIN... THE REGRET THAT EATS AWAY AT MY SOUL...
KUHUH, JUUUST KIDDING...
DID I EVER TELL YOU I WAS IN A RAILROAD CIRCUS...?
RAILROAD? YOU MEAN THOSE CIRCUSES THAT TOUR THE COUNTRY BY TRAIN?
RIGHT ON. EVEN THE ANIMALS AND THE TENT GO ALONG.
IT WAS NOT SHORT OF PEOPLE...
I WAS BORN INTO A FAMILY OF KNIFE-THROWERS FROM THAT CIRCUS. I HAD ONE YOUNGER BROTHER.

FWOH

BUT, YOU KNOW... EVER SINCE I JOINED THE NAKAMACHI CIRCUS...

...IT'S BEEN A BLAST...

CLICK

WELL, I DID END UP IN ANOTHER BUSINESS, THOUGH.

T-THAT'S PRETTY PRESTI-GIOUS.

YOU EVEN MADE PLUSH TOYS FOR ME.

YEAH...

HEY, REMEM-BER IT, MITSU-USHI?

IT'S A SHABBY CIRCUS, BUT...

...THERE'S LOTS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN IT.

YEAH...

I-IT WOULD BE NICE IF YOU DID IT...

TO RIDE A TRAIN LIKE THIS... WORKING AS A CIRCUS ARTIST WITH MY BROTHER...

GACHUNK

TO TOP IT OFF, NOW I'M RIDING A LOCOMOTIVE WITH A CIRCUS TROUPE.

BUT I CAN'T. BECAUSE HE'S DEAD...

IT WAS A DREAM OF MINE...

SOMETHING'S HERE, AND FROM THE LOOKS OF IT...

HUH...?

HEY, YOU TWO BETTER GO TO THE NEXT CAR.

OH... MY CONDO-LENCES...

WOOSHH

...SEEMS TO BE A PERSONAL RIVAL OF MINE.

SWOSH

HUMANS, I'LL SHOOT YOU DEAD WITH MY RIFLE!!

AHA HAHA, FOUND YOU...

WE'VE GOT FIREARMS HERE AS WELL, JANE!

Translation: Kaidu
Proof: coolmandudebroguy, Bai-Gon Gin
Redraws: stefe
QC: Bai-Gon Gin, stefe
Cleans: Kaidu/BaganLee
Typeset: Iiiik (396), Kaidu (397-405), Amon Us (403)